

What Is Claimed Is:

1 1. A method for establishing a virtual circuit from a client to one of a
2 plurality of servers through a network, comprising the steps of:

3 (1) receiving a request for connection from a client, wherein said
4 request specifies a functional group, and wherein said functional group includes
5 a plurality of servers, each capable of servicing said client;

6 (2) selecting a server from said functional group;

7 (3) computing a route to said server; and

8 (4) establishing a virtual circuit from said client to said server via said
9 route.

1 2. The method of claim 1, wherein said step of selecting a server further
2 comprises selecting an operational server from said functional group which has
3 the highest available computational power.

1 3. The method of claim 1, wherein said client is a telephone switching
2 system.

1 4. The method of claim 1, wherein said network is an ATM network.

1 5. The method of claim 1, wherein said network is a TCP/IP network.

1 6. A system for establishing a virtual circuit from a client to one of a
2 plurality of servers through a network, comprising:

3 an interface module coupled to receive a routing request from the
4 network, wherein said routing request specifies a functional group and a client,
5 and wherein said functional group includes a plurality of servers, each capable of
6 servicing said client;

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4 interface means for enabling a computer to receive a routing request from
5 a network, wherein said routing request specifies a functional group and a client,
6 and wherein said functional group includes a plurality of servers, each capable of
7 servicing said client;

8 server means for enabling said computer to select a server from said
9 functional group; and

10 routing means for enabling said computer to determine a route from said
11 client to said server through said network.

1 15. The computer program product of claim 14, wherein said network is an
2 ATM network.

1 16. The computer program product of claim 14, wherein said network is a
2 TCP/IP network.

1 17. The computer program product of claim 15, wherein said computer
2 program logic further comprises:

3 a peer group leader means for enabling said computer to cause said ATM
4 network to elect said system as a peer group leader.

1 18. The computer program product of claim 14, wherein said server means
2 enables said computer to select an operational server from said functional group
3 which has the highest available computational power.

1 19. The computer program product of claim 14, wherein said server means
2 further enables said computer to maintain a list of functional groups within said
3 network.

1 20. The computer program product of claim 14, wherein said client is a
2 telephone switching system.

1 21. The computer program product of claim 15, wherein each of said plurality
2 of servers responds to an ATM address for said functional group.

1 22. A computer, comprising:
2 a processor;
3 interface means for enabling said processor to receive a routing request
4 from a network, wherein said routing request specifies a functional group and a
5 client, and wherein said functional group includes a plurality of servers, each
6 capable of servicing said client;
7 server means for enabling said processor to select a server from said
8 functional group; and
9 routing means for enabling said processor to determine a route from said
10 client to said server through said network.

1 23. The computer of claim 22, wherein said network is an ATM network.

1 24. The computer of claim 22, wherein said network is a TCP/IP network.

1 25. The computer of claim 23, wherein said computer further comprises:
2 a peer group leader means for enabling said processor to cause said ATM
3 network to elect said system as a peer group leader.

1 26. The computer of claim 22, wherein said server means enables said
2 processor to select an operational server from said functional group which has the
3 highest available computational power.

1 27. The computer of claim 22, wherein said server means further enables said
2 processor to maintain a list of functional groups within said network.

1 28. The computer of claim 22, wherein said client is a telephone switching
2 system.

1 29. The computer of claim 23, wherein each of said plurality of servers
2 responds to an ATM address for said functional group.

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